



***For Release***

***10:30 PM, Monday, June 5, 2017***

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## **Broken Nose Theatre and Refuge Theatre Project Take Top Honors at the 44th Annual Non-Equity Jeff Awards Ceremony**

### **David Cerda receives Special Award**

*June 5, 2017 - Chicago, IL.* “At the Table,” Michael Perlman’s drama of scintillating conversation between diverse friends during a weekend in the country, took home the most honors on Monday, June 5, during the 44th Annual Non-Equity Jeff Awards ceremony recognizing excellence in non-union Chicago theatre. The awards show was held at the Athenaeum Theatre for the first time, a fitting venue since it is home to several non-Equity theater companies. Approximately 750 people were in attendance, and the evening featured production numbers and excerpts from the season’s nominated musicals and plays. Brief memorial tributes were also paid to Martha Lavey, former Artistic Director of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and to Samuel G. Roberson Jr., the Artistic Director of Congo Square Theatre Company, both of whom passed away this year.

“At the Table,” produced by the Broken Nose Theatre, received Jeff Awards for Production-Play, Ensemble, Director-Play (Spenser Davis) and Actress in a Supporting Role-Play (Echaka Agba). These awards were quite an achievement for Broken Nose, especially since this was its first year of Jeff eligibility. Top honors in the musical category went to Refuge Theatre Project for its production of “High Fidelity”, based on the movie starring John Cusack about a record store owner and his loves and friends. “High Fidelity” received awards for Production-Musical Director-Musical (Christopher Pazdernik) and Scenic Design (Michelle Manni). Like Broken Nose, this was also Refuge Theatre Project’s first year of Jeff eligibility.

Alexis J. Roston and Lillian Castillo were emcees for this year's award show. Brenda Didier directed Monday's ceremony, with musical direction provided by Jimmy Morehead. John D. Glover, Non-Equity Wing Chair of the Jeff Awards, produced the event.

David Liesse, Chair of the 55-member Jeff Awards, welcomed the audience and presented this year's Special Jeff Award honoring David Cerda, the Artistic Director and creative force behind "Hell in a Handbag Productions," for his theatrical and charitable contributions. His award read: Congratulations and Thanks for "Dragging" the Chicago Theatre world into your "Hell in a Handbag" with humor, heart, hilarity and humanity."

Season of Concern, the charity providing grants to members of the theatre community who are unable to work due to illness or injury, presented its Biscotto-Miller Award to Lifeline Theatre for raising the most money this year among non-union entities.

The Solo Performance Award went to Philip Dawkins for his work in "The Happiest Place on Earth," produced by Greenhouse Theater Center and Sideshow Theatre Company. Awards for Principal Performance in a Play went to Amy Johnson for her portrayal of a mother of an autistic child in "Falling" at Interrobang Theatre Project, George Seegebrecht as the Lindbergh kidnapper in "Hauptmann" at City Lit Theater Company, and to Gage Wallace as a sinfully elegant schemer in "Taste," produced by Red Theater Chicago. Awards for Principal Performance in a Musical were bestowed on Henry McGinniss for his portrayal of Bat Boy in "Bat Boy: The Musical" with Griffin Theatre Company, and to Colette Todd for her portrayal of a wife and mother coping with mental illness in "Next To Normal" at BoHo Theatre. Colette also won the award for Actor/Actress in a Revue as Angela in "Honky Tonk Angels" at Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre.

Supporting Actor and Actress awards went to Justin Tsatsa for his role as Josh in "Falling" at Interrobang Theatre Project, Echaka Agba as Lauren in "At the Table" with Broken Nose Theatre, Scott Danielson as Officer Lockstock in BoHo Theatre's musical "Urinetown," and to Veronica Garza as Tonya and Nancy's mother in Underscore Theatre Company's musical "Tonya and Nancy the Rock Opera."

The award for Music Direction went to Jeremy Ramey for "The Most Happy Fella" with Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre, and the Choreography award went to Aubrey Adams for "Urinetown" with BoHo Theatre. The Jeff Award for Original Music in a Play was bestowed on Natasha Bogojevich for "Gentle" with TUTA Theatre Chicago.

Technical honors went to Lighting Designer Kevin D. Gawley for "A Wrinkle In Time" at Lifeline Theatre, Scenic Designer Michelle Manni for "High Fidelity" at Refuge Theatre Project, Costume Designer John Nasca for Pride Films and Plays' "Priscilla: Queen of the Desert" and Sound Designer Stephen Ptacek for "How We Got On" with Haven Theatre Company. Awards in Fight Choreography and Projection Design were also presented to Ryan Bourque for "Prowess" at Jackalope Theatre Company and Anthony Churchill for "The Body of an American" at Stage Left Theatre, respectively.

Additionally, three new works (two plays and one musical) were recognized: Ike Holter's "Prowess," produced by Jackalope Theatre Company, which is an enthralling depiction of the tender balance between well-meaning heroism and vigilante justice during a summer in Chicago; Alex Lubischer for "Bobbie Clearly," produced by Steep Theatre Company, which is a dark comedy about a community trying to make sense of senseless violence in Milton, Nebraska; and to Robert Kauzlaric & George Howe for "Northanger Abbey," produced by Lifeline Theatre, and is a musical adaptation based on the first of Jane Austen's novels and a satire of the Gothic novels popular at the time of its first writing in 1798-99.

The Jeff Awards has been honoring outstanding theatre artists annually since it was established in 1968. With up to 55 members representing a wide variety of backgrounds in theatre (including producers, directors, actors, playwrights, designers, professors of theatre, entertainment lawyers and agents, and theatre lovers), the Jeff Awards are committed to celebrating the vitality of Chicago area theatre by recognizing excellence through its recommendations, awards, and honors. Opening night judges include not only the members but also the team of Artistic & Technical theatre volunteers (the "A/T Team") which include Artistic Directors, producers, directors from the major Chicago theatres, actors, designers, etc. The Jeff Awards fosters the artistic growth of area theatres and theatre artists and promotes educational opportunities, audience appreciation, and civic pride in the achievements of the theatre community. Each year, the Jeff Awards adjudicate over 250 theatrical productions and host two awards ceremonies. Originally chartered to recognize only Equity productions, the Jeff Awards established the Non-Equity Wing in 1973 to celebrate outstanding achievement in non-union theatre. The next Equity Awards ceremony, honoring productions presented under union contracts, will be held on Monday, November 6, 2017, at Drury Lane Oakbrook in Oakbrook Terrace.

### **2017 Non-Equity Jeff Award Recipients**

#### **PRODUCTION - PLAY**

"At the Table" - Broken Nose Theatre

#### **PRODUCTION - MUSICAL**

"High Fidelity" - Refuge Theatre Project

#### **ENSEMBLE**

"At the Table" - Broken Nose Theatre

#### **DIRECTOR - PLAY**

Spenser Davis - "At the Table" - Broken Nose Theatre

#### **DIRECTOR - MUSICAL**

Christopher Pazdernik - "High Fidelity" - Refuge Theatre Project

#### **ACTOR IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE - PLAY**

George Seegebrecht (Hauptmann) - "Hauptmann" - City Lit Theater Company

Gage Wallace (Terry) - "Taste" - Red Theater Chicago

ACTOR IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE - MUSICAL

Henry McGinniss (Bat Boy/Edgar) - "Bat Boy: The Musical" - Griffin Theatre Company

ACTRESS IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE - PLAY

Amy Johnson (Tami) - "Falling" - Interrobang Theatre Project

ACTRESS IN A PRINCIPAL ROLE - MUSICAL

Colette Todd (Diana) - "Next to Normal" - BoHo Theatre

ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE - PLAY

Justin Tsatsa (Josh) - "Falling" - Interrobang Theatre Project

ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE - MUSICAL

Scott Danielson (Officer Lockstock) - "Urinetown" - BoHo Theatre

ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE - PLAY

Echaka Agba (Lauren) - "At the Table" - Broken Nose Theatre

ACTRESS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE - MUSICAL

Veronica Garza (Nancy/Tonya's Mom) - "Tonya and Nancy: The Rock Opera" - Underscore Theatre Company

SOLO PERFORMANCE

Philip Dawkins (Performer) - "The Happiest Place on Earth" - Greenhouse Theater Center and Sideshow Theatre Company

ACTOR/ACTRESS IN A REVUE

Colette Todd (Angela) - "Honky Tonk Angels" - Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre

NEW PLAY

Ike Holter - "Prowess" - Jackalope Theatre Company

Alex Lubischer - "Bobbie Clearly" - Steep Theatre Company

NEW MUSICAL

Robert Kauzlaric and George Howe - "Northanger Abbey" - Lifeline Theatre

CHOREOGRAPHY

Aubrey Adams - "Urinetown" - BoHo Theatre

ORIGINAL MUSIC IN A PLAY

Natasha Bogojevich - "Gentle" - TUTA Theatre Chicago

MUSIC DIRECTION

Jeremy Ramey - "The Most Happy Fella" - Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre

## SCENIC DESIGN

Michelle Manni - "High Fidelity" - Refuge Theatre Project

## LIGHTING DESIGN

Kevin D. Gawley - "A Wrinkle in Time" - Lifeline Theatre

## COSTUME DESIGN

John Nasca - "Priscilla: Queen of the Desert" - Pride Films and Plays

## SOUND DESIGN

Stephen Ptacek - "How We Got On" - Haven Theatre Company

## PROJECTION DESIGN

Anthony Churchill - "The Body of an American" - Stage Left Theatre

## FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY

Ryan Bourque - "Prowess" - Jackalope Theatre Company

## **MULTIPLE RECIPIENTS**

### **Theater Companies**

Broken Nose Theatre – 4

BoHo Theatre – 3

Refuge Theatre Project – 3

Interrobang Theatre Project – 2

Jackalope Theatre Company – 2

Lifeline Theatre – 2

Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre – 2

### **Productions**

At the Table – 4

High Fidelity – 3

Falling – 2

Prowess – 2

Urinetown – 2

### **Performers**

Colette Todd – 2